

I would like to thank the Committee Chair for taking up House Bill 4923, as introduced by Rep. Andy Meisner. I have introduced an identical bill, Senate Bill 120, in the Michigan Senate. I have a deep interest in changing our current food stamp distribution method from once a month to twice monthly.

As you may know, currently DHS issues food stamps the first 10 days of the month. Food stamp recipients will naturally frequent stores and shop for food during these first 10 days of the month. This poses a problem for many store owners who have very minimal store activity the remaining days of the month. After hearing from many store owners and employees about this unfortunate predicament, I took it upon myself last summer to visit stores within my district and speak directly with store owners, as well as food stamp recipients. I was amazed at what I saw and heard. At one store, a woman with an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card was purchasing 7 gallons of milk, telling me that she takes it home and freezes it. Others mentioned that they will typically spend all or most of their food stamp allotment during one shopping trip. This made me wonder about the ability of individuals to have fresh foods, fruits and vegetables for their families *throughout the month*.

I question the department's response that "enactment of this change would be very costly for DHS." With today's technology and the fact that transactions are done through an EBT card (electronically), I do not believe that "programming new issue dates," or "substantial new postage costs" would become major cost factors in implementing this policy change.

Currently, DHS issues **cash assistance** to qualifying recipients twice monthly. Most people that I know are compensated every two weeks by their employer. It makes sense to also provide food stamps to eligible clients twice monthly.

In summary, the merits of this legislation include:

- 1) Assist retailers, suppliers, wholesalers and manufacturers across the state, who suffer serious financial, management, and inventory problems which result from the current EBT payment method of just once per month;
- 2) Assist employees who work in our stores and often times find their hours significantly reduced or are laid off as a direct result of minimal store activity at the end of each month;
- 3) Provide an opportunity for food stamp recipients to have fresh and healthy foods, fruits and vegetables throughout the month.

I believe that I was elected to put into place sound public policy for the citizens of Michigan. I firmly believe that House Bill 4923/SB 120 is good public policy that can help not only our families, but also Michigan's retailers, suppliers, wholesalers and manufacturers, and our hard working employees.

Thank you again for allowing testimony to be taken on this important issue.